[Medieval Georgia]

565 181 endured under a bright sun among the wild and primitive woodlands that has made their character what it is—which has given them their gay and brave fatality.

565 511 "The Poor People", says Chardin, "go almost naked: such is their misery not to be paralell'd; as not having anything to cover their Nakedness but a pitiful sorry Felt like to the Chlamys of the Ancients; into which they thrust their Heads, and turn which way they please as the Wind fits; for it covers but one side of their Bodies, and falls down no lower than their knees. . . .

"He that has a Shirt and a pair of pitiful Drawers thinks himself Rich: for almost all of 'em go Bare-Foot; and such of the Colchians who pretend to Shooes, have nothing but a piece of Buffalo's Hide, and that untann'd too; which piece of raw Hide is lac'd about their Feet with a Thong of the same: so that for all these sort of Sandals, their Feet are as durty, as if they went Bare-foot."

565 847 The respectable jeweller cannot understand the ragged gentlemen at all. He mentions:

"another most inhuman Tenent of theirs, that it is a piece of Charity to Murder Infants newly born, when they have not sufficient wherewith to maintain 'em; or such as are sick and past hopes of recovery. And the reason they give is this, that by so doing, they put those Children out of a great deal of misery, which they would undergo in a languishing Distemper, which in the end must of necessity carry 'em off. Such are the Arguments of these Barbarous People that have neither shame nor Humanity." [1]

[1] *Chardin* (1686 ed.), pp. 85–6.

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

rounded and shaven, leaving only a little heare,[1] after the manner of our abbotts that have great revenewes, and they suffer their mostacchi to growe a quarter of a yard longer than their beardes. On their heades they weare a litell cappe, of divers colors, w^th a creste on the toppe. On their backes they weare certein garments meetely lenge, but they be straite and open behinde downe to the buttocks; for otherwise they coulde not gett to horsebacke; wherein I do not blame them, for I see the Frenchmen use the like. On their feete and leggs they weare bootes or busgynes, made with their soles of such a sorte that wann they stande the heele and the too too^che the grounde, but the plante of the foote standeth so high that yo^u may easilie thrust yor fyst undernethe w^thout hurting of it, whereof it foloweth that wann they go afoote, they go w^th paine. I wolde in this part blame them, if it were not that I know the Persians use the same. In their feeding (as I have seen the experience in the house of one of the principall of them) they use this maner. They have certain square tables of halfe a yarde brode, with a ledge round about; in the myddest whereof they putt a quantitie of panico sodden, w^thout salte or other fatt; and this they use in steade of podaige. On an other like table they putt the fleshe of a wilde bore, so litell brooyled that wann they cut it the bloudee cometh out, which they eate very willingely. I coulde not awaie w^thall, and therefore drave foo'the the tyme with that podaige. Wyne we had plentie and that trugged about lustilie: but other kinde of vittails we had none." [2]

Contarini, who appears to have been rather an impatient traveller, of the pompous and indignant kind with which all ages and all "natives" are familiar, had a poor opinion of the people, whom he had come to embroil in a new war. He was, he says, "*much annoyed by the Georgiani, who are as mad as the Mengrelians* [3] . . . *the brutes appeared never to have seen man before*".[4]

Contarini had sailed from Caffa for Atina, but he eventually landed near Fasso, whither he proceeded to Kutais and Gori. He found the Mingrelians in a bad way.

> "There are stone quarries in the country, and a little corn and wine is also produced, but of no great value. The men live miserably on millet made hard like polenta, and the women fare more miserably still; and were it not for a little wine and salt fish imported from Trebizond, and salt from Capha, they would be very badly off. They produce canvas and wax, but in small quantities. If they were industrious they might procure as much fish as they required from the rivers." [5]

Barbaro was a bluff, more genial man than Contarini, and his observations which have come down to us in William Thomas' English of the time of Mary I, have about them

[1] Cf. *Chardin*, p. 86.
[2] Contarini (*V. in P.*), p. 119.
[3] Barbaro (*V. in P.*), p. 36.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 122.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

[Ambrogio Contarini, see 341 COT. III, p. 329- Annals]

certain terse reality. Barbaro's account of Mingrelia is a descriptive masterpiece, in that in one short incident he gives a picture of the political dereliction, the social misery and the economic poverty of the country, and it is an immortal irony —withal unconscious—on the mind of the superior European who pursues his way in foreign parts.

"The Lorde of the province, named Bendian,[1] hath two walled townes on the foresaid sea, one called Vathi,[2] and an other Souastopoli,[3] and besides that divers other piles and stronge houses. The cuntrie is all stonie and barayn wi^thout any kinde of graine, saving panico. Salte is brought into them out of Capha. They make a litell clothe but it is both course and naught; and they are a beastly people. For proof whereof, being in Vathie (where one Azolin Squarciafigo, a Genowaie arryved in companie of a Paranderia of Turks that went thither with us from Constantinople), there was a yonge woman stode in her doore into whom this Genowaie saied SURINA PATRO NI COCON? which is 'mistress is the good man within?' meaneng her husbande. She answered ARCHILIMISI that is, to wit, he woll come anon. Whereupon he swapped her on the lippes and shewed her unto me, saieng, behold what faire teeth she hath, and so shewed me her breast and touched her teates, which she suffered without moving. Afterwards we entered into her house, and sate us downe, and this Azolin fayneng to have vermyn about him beckoned on her to searche him: which she did verie diligentlie and chastely. This, meane while, the good man came in, and my companion put his hands in his purse and said PATRON TETARI SICA,[4] which is as much to say as, Mr. hast thow any mooney? Whereunto he made a countenance that he had nothe about him: and so he tooke him a fewe aspres, w^th the w^ch he went streight to bye some vittaills. Within a while after we went through the towne to sporte us and this Genowaie did every wheare after the maner of that cuntrey what pleased him w^thout reproche of any man, whereby it may appear weather they be beastly people or no, and therefore the Genowaies that practise in those use for a proverbe to saie, Tho^u art a Mongrello wann they are disposed to saie, tho^u art a foole."

With the closing of the Black Sea by the Turks at the end of the fifteenth century the Georgians became isolated from those Greek and Latin influences with which they had been in intimate contact during the Middle Ages. And during the whole of the sixteenth century Georgia and the rest of the Caucasian lands were the battle-ground of the recurrent Turko-Persian wars, which endured, with intermissions, from the defeat of Shah Ismail Safi by Sultan Selim

[1] There is a confusion here between the Dadiani of Mingrelia and the Bediani or Bishop of Bedia; Barbaro apparently refers to the Dadiani Lipariti of Wakhushti.

[2] Vathi = Fasso = Poti.

[3] Souastopoli = Iskaur, near the site of Sukhum.

[4] Tetari = *tetri*, in Georgian, "a white" = silver coin and the smallest unit of Georgian currency.

nesse and as good and thin-shaled as are our filberts. Of these are carried yearly the quantity of 4,000 camells laden".[1]

Tolochanov has some interesting details on the habits and ways of life of the Imerians. They dressed generally in the Turkish or Persian fashion, although they wore their own local costumes which consisted of a sort of long *caftans* with short sleeves. The high-heeled shoes noted by the Venetians were still in use, although Turkish slippers were much worn and the poorer classes favoured sandals. They wore blouses and shirts of all colours except white, and made generally of silk. All classes carried swords and sabres mostly of Persian or German make which they wore even in church. They wore leather belts ornamented with gold and silver, and all carried *kinjals* (the long thin straight Caucasian daggers). For fighting the bow was still in use, but muskets and pistols were common. The most prized horses were the Argamak stallions of Kabardán breed.[2]

The Georgian dynasts even in the dog-days of the Mussulman hegemony maintained a degree of wealth and enjoyed a state of luxury which was in strange contrast to the poverty and misery in which their subjects wallowed all around them. This contrast always has been, and still is, characteristic of Eastern cultures, and for that matter the phenomenon is by no means confined either to the east or to the centuries preceding the Industrial Revolution.

It would be interesting to devote a separate work to the consideration of how the failure to use specie for its proper function of facilitating the circulation of the products of the world has—as a result of the interplay of the instincts for accumulation and ostentation—checked the full use of the natural wealth of the earth by the people living on it. Tolochanov, during his audience of King Taymurazi in his manor in Radsha, and of King Alexander in the palace at Kutais, must have seen before his eyes a very large part of the movable and unusable wealth of Georgia of the seventeenth century. King Taymurazi, although his fortunes had sunk considerably lower than they were when Mishetski visited him ten years before, was living in no little luxury, surrounded by a numerous retinue and making a display of wealth which excited the admiration of an ambassador accustomed to the splendours of the Muscovite court. Taymurazi was a vigorous patriot and one of the most enlightened men of his day. His country was in enemy occupation, desolate and despoiled. And we

[1] Hakluyt's *Voyages*, p. 447. [2] Polevitzov, *Tolochanov*, pp. 110 *et seq.*

[N. Kipher Tolochanov - see Cat. T. 116, pp. 344-345 - Analyst]

1: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 R11 Georgia R11

are told by Mishetski that "*King Taymurazi and his heir are much loved by the people . . . . the princes and the aznaurs guard the King's life zealously. . . . . The people in the land are kind-hearted*".[1] The human mind works in a mysterious way. It does still.

The Court of Alexander was a more splendid affair than that of his exiled guest. We are fortunate in that Tolochanov had left us an intimate description of it, and Castelli has made two excellent drawings of the King. The Imerian ruler was about forty years of age when Castelli drew his picture, and he had reigned in Kutais for twelve years at the time of the visit of the Russian Mission. His figure had coarsened from heavy living; his expression is arrogant and lecherous, yet not without a certain shrewdness in it. He had been twelve years married to his second wife—Taymurazi's daughter,[2] and he showed himself during his chequered and not unsuccessful reign, a strange mixture of ruthlessness and generosity, of brutality and kindliness.

When Tolochanov saw the King in audience, he wore his state regalia in which he has been depicted by Castelli —a crown "beautifully set with pearls and precious stones" and surmounted by a cross studded with diamonds, rubies and emeralds; in his hand a sceptre inlaid with gold and mounted with precious stones with inset in its apple a stone with the Christ carved thereon. He wore a mantle of sable and velvet embroidered in gold and underneath a caftan of watered silk stitched with gold thread and bordered with gold lace. Castelli's picture, which answers in detail to Tolochanov's description, shows the King with the long locks fashionable in contemporary Christendom, and he has the heavy sweeping moustaches which were the mode in the East right down to the last century. In Castelli's picture he has not shaved for some days. Tolochanov observed that behind and above the King's head triptyches had been placed, and at his right hand was another sceptre, surmounted by a miniature shrine. The shrine was crowned by a cross in gold, inlaid with precious stones which were rather large in size. Yet another sceptre, of similar design, was placed on his left, and against a pillar, in front of the King, was propped one more of exactly the same kind. The Catholicos of Abkhazeti sat on Alexander's right, and next to him was

[1] Polievktov, *Mishetski's Mission*, p. 160.

[2] Nestan-Darejani, who, after Alexander's death, caused the new King, Bagrati, her step-son, to be blinded when he was only sixteen years of age. Her intrigues, her amours, and her horrid death are described in detail by Chardin.

[Wikipedia: Tolochanov; see also 116, pp 344-345 -- Analyst]

l: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

195X growing prosperity since the visit of Mishetski, thirty years before Chardin. Such is the bounteousness of Nature in defiance of man's stupidity, and nowhere is she more bounteous than in the soft and sparkling Georgian land. Chardin could praise it.

● 511 "Georgia", he says, "is as fertile a country as any can be imagin'd, where a man may live both deliciously and very cheap. Their Bread is as good as any in the World; their Fruit is delicious and of all sorts. Neither is there any part of Europe that produces fairer Pears and Apples, or better tasted, nor does any part of Asia bring forth more delicious Pomegranates. Cattel is very plentiful and very good, as well the larger sort as the lesser. Their Fowl of all sorts is incomparable, especially their Wild-Fowl; their Boars-Flesh is as plentiful and as good as any in Colchis. Their Common People live upon nothing else but young Porkers; of which there are abundance in all parts of the country; and there is no better Food in the World than this Meat; beside that the People of the Country assure us that it never offends the Stomach, let 'em eat never so much. Which I believe to be true; for though I ate of it almost every Meal, yet it never did me harm. The Caspian Sea which is next to Georgia and the Kurr, that runs through it, supplies it with all sorts of salt and fresh Fish, so that we may truly say that there is no country where a Man may have an Opportunity to fare better than in this." [1]

195X In the seventeenth century the economic situation of the Georgian lands had in many respects reverted to that which existed during the days of the Arab domination in the eastern Caucasus. For if Imier—"that side"—depended on the Black Sea and formed part of the commercial and maritime system of the Turks which extended all round the shores of the Sea from Stambul to Caffa and the Crimean and Danubian ports, Amier—"this side"—had reverted to an Iranian control and was attached to the Caspian lands. During the two centuries following the capture of Constantinople by the Turks and the re-establishment of that site as a focus of political and commercial mastery, Turks and Persians had fought six long wars to decide the control of the Ponto-Caspian isthmus, without either the one or the other securing a lasting supremacy. The Safavid dynasty had its origin in Aran; the Turks during the last quarter of the sixteenth century, under the Sultans Sulaiman and Selim II, had occupied Erivan, Shamakha and Derbend, and when Shah Abbas the Great succeeded to the Persian throne, he had undertaken a long war to expel the Osmanli from a country which was at once the seat of his own family and famous for its ancient wealth

[1] Chardin, p. 189.

l: Allen H-4 (no date) 1932 RI1 Georgia RI1

and venerated in Persian traditions far older than the Safavi dynasty. 175X

By the latter half of the seventeenth century, one of those recurrent crises of decay which seem to be endemic in despotic institutions, was already carrying the Safavids to their bloody end: and in Turkey the reforms of the Kuprulu viziers were not going to check that disastrous cracking which before the century was out first heralded the breaking of the Ottoman Empire (Treaty of Carlovich, 1696). In the Caucasian lands there was a stagnation in politics; the conquerors were falling into fattened age, the conquered were still cowed and always quarrelling. And so, in the Caucasus in the last period of Islamic power, we see much the same conditions as in the first period, a thousand years before.

The loose administration of the Persian Empire in the northern provinces constituted three vilayets. The northernmost was Shirvan which included the old cities of Derbend, Baku and Shamakha. The second was Aran, which comprised the country between the southern parts of Shirvan and the Araks. Its capital was Erivan, and it included the Armenian country as far as Bayazid, and such Georgian districts as Dmanisi and Algeti. The Georgian vice-royalty of Kartli and Kakheti formed, nominally, part of Aran. The third of the northern provinces was Azerbaijan with the residence of the governor at Tabriz.[1] The prosperity of the Muslim towns of the eastern Caucasus was still great. Of Aran, the ambassador of Holstein wrote in 1662, that "*it is one of the Noblest and the Richest Provinces of all Persia and in this particularly, that it produces more Silk than any other*".[2] Barda'a, Baylakan and Kabala had not survived the devastations of the Timurid wars; and Areshi, another important centre on the borders of Shirvan and Kakheti, had never recovered from its destruction during the Turkish invasion of the Caspian provinces. But Baku and Derbend, Shamakha and Shaki, Erivan and Ganja, were still great commercial places. Contarini in the fifteenth century had declared Shamakha to be a better city than Tabriz.[3] Olearius describes its bazaar, its schools, its mosques and baths, and says of its production of textiles, that it was so great that "*Women, nay, very Children, make a shift to get their living there by spinning and preparing the silk and cotton for the workmen*".[4] Evliya, who hoped that the Turks might yet recover the city, says that— [511] [288] [288]

[1] Olearius, p. 197. [2] *Idem.* [3] Contarini, *V. in P.*, p. 144. [4] Olearius, p. 222.